

ROSAMOND OF MONTERRE

A Canadian Pastoral



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In the low murmur of the Canadian pines
I hear the whisperings of half-forgotten days.



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TO MY HUSBAND
WILLIAM COPLEY WINSLOW
A LOVING TRIBUTE

ROSAMOND OF MONTERRE

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I

TRAGEDY had fallen on the little village of Monterre. The sun going down behind the mountains across the lake touched the foothills and changed their spotless white of snow to a rosy flush, which deepened, as it reached the frozen lake, from crimson to purple. The royal yet sombre hue of the winter sky seemed a fitting background to the scene as a little company of mourners followed their beloved dead to the graveyard, which lay to the right of the village church.

There had been a fresh fall of snow the night before, and the garment of white over hill and village seemed symbolic of the life of the dead man they were bearing to his last resting place, for the Reverend Ernest Huntington Dare—"Father Dare," as many of his people loved to call him—had met with a fatal accident in saving the life of a drowning child.

His flock had prayed for his life, even if he never again could take up the work of his parish as of old; but after lingering for a week, filled to the very last with messages of love and advice to his "children," and with the two or three dearest to him on earth by his side, a look of great joy illumined his face, as he passed "into life" just as

the sun was going down, a ball of gold, behind the mountains. His hour of death was in keeping with what he had often been heard to say,—that the important events of life had occurred at sunset.

"We cannot do without him," went out as one voice—"and the child, what will become of her?"

The little chapel had never before in the middle of winter seen such wealth of blossom. Although the village folk were too poor to show their love and reverence in gifts of flowers, many a rare and fragrant flower found its place on the simple casket that on this still winter afternoon was lowered into the earth.

The final benediction seemed to be in the softly falling flakes that came down later as if to make a warm covering for the new grave.

As the last spadeful of earth fell, a man, holding a tiny child on his shoulder, came hurrying toward the spot. The boy held in his arms a pot containing a scarlet geranium. When they reached the little group the father placed his child on the snowy ground, and in broken English said to a priest who was coming toward him, "May my child, Père Angelo, put this little plant on the Father's grave? He gave his life to save my crippled boy, and this is all he can bring in return."

"Dear Père Angelo," the child cried in a weak, shrill voice, "Miss Rosamond won't be angry with me, will she, for giving away the plant she brought me? She told me to take good care of it and water it every day, and when it blossomed

to give the first flower to you. I promised, Père Angelo, and now I have broken my word, but you see I have nothing I loved so much to bring to Father Dare, unless it was the tin soldiers you gave me once."

Père Angelo lifted the frail little creature in his strong arms and, putting his face down to the tear-stained cheek, said; "My son, I will absolve you. When you tell Miss Rosamond all about it, she will love you the more for doing what you have done."

But as the child was carried home on Père Angelo's own shoulders, he turned his face to give one long, lingering look at the flower he had left behind him and, with a sigh that held a tear, said, "Do you suppose it will miss me very much, Père Angelo?"

II

Father Dare and Père Angelo had been close comrades, and so it did not surprise the inhabitants of Monterre that the next Sunday morning after the burial, while a special service was taking place at the little English church on the hill among the Canadian pines, a requiem was being rendered at the "Church of Our Lady" at the upper side of the village by Père Angelo, for the eternal rest of this good man's soul.

While the village folk were pouring out their words of love and grief to each other, many pondered at the seemingly deep friendship between Father Dare and Père Angelo. Differing as they did on some points of doctrine, where heart and mind were concerned they met on common ground; over a pipe and a bottle of rare old wine, which once a year Père Angelo would bring to his friend, they would forget for the moment all differences of opinion. Père Angelo would stretch his sensitively shaped hand across the table and, touching Father Dare on the arm, would say in a voice that it had taken generations to bring to so rich a perfection: "My friend, perhaps if I had been you, your Church would have satisfied me. I needed my Church's help; you might have entered heaven without it."

Then Father Dare would look down on the

younger man and into his deep passionate eyes, longing to be allowed to enter with him into a chamber of his heart that he knew was locked from the world. He would try in his gentle way to make Père Angelo talk of his past life—the life of the world, that Father Dare felt sure he had known and loved. But never could he lift the curtain beyond the days when he had entered the priesthood. And so the two men would often sit in silence, gazing off across a stretch of peaceful meadow-land, from a fragrant vine-covered porch where, after a busy summer day, they often met; one, sometimes with a look of great longing and unrest in his face; the other, with the calm and peace that had grown out of much sorrow.

But never for long at the rectory were they allowed introspection, for there was a child who wielded a power over these two men which she did not herself realize, but who unconsciously cast perpetual sunshine about her.

Across the lawn a girl's figure would be seen coming toward them. They looked at her with loving admiration, but on the face of Father Dare came an expression of compassion and pity as he called: "This way, my child. Père Angelo and I are in the grape arbor."

With a quick turn and slight tightening of the leash attached to the great Dane at her side, she would come to the little arbor at one end of the "vineyard," as Father Dare delighted to dignify the small grapery—his pride and pleasure. Many

hours each day the sun poured into the hearts of these ripening purple grapes such sweetness as only northern fruit possesses.

Canada waits long for the perfection of the product of her rich soil and sometimes never sees it, as when Fall pushes the rapturous Summer day suddenly aside, coming early with unbounded measure of cold; but fortunately that is not often, and for many a year the child Rosamond and Father Dare made the gathering of the amber and purple grapes a holiday.

It always began with a breakfast in the arbor. A little table was placed at one end, with guests of Rosamond's own choosing. Among these was the little crippled boy on the hill who went out only when carried, but who, perched on a high stool, was a great help at this important gathering time, for all the guests were obliged to work for their breakfast.

As the grapes were cut down, the largest bunches were brought first to Rosamond and before being packed in their baskets she touched them with her soft cheek. It was as if a peach were being caressed. The beauty of the clusters had to come to her through her sense of touch, for she was blind.

III

The day following the picking of the grapes was the greatest joy of all to Rosamond. She and Father Dare, with Bowman, the faithful housekeeper, would start off early in the morning with their shabby little cart filled with baskets of grapes. For market? No, indeed! First to Père Angelo's, where basket after basket was handed out—a few choice clusters for his own simple table, but the larger share for the sick in his parish. Then off they went again to scatter their gifts in Father Dare's own parish.

At last the vineyard seemed to take on some secret power,—and the village doctor was known to send a messenger in haste for a bunch of Father Dare's "magic grapes" for old Mrs. Le Mire who would take the doctor's medicine on one condition,—that she might have a bunch, a very small bunch, of Father Dare's grapes which, after all, she told a neighbor was really what saved her life, although she would not let the good doctor know it for the world.

And so the fame of the little grape arbor grew and no one seemed surprised when one day a stranger in Monterre asked for Father Dare, "the grower of the magic grapes."

The simple people of the village did not realize that the so-called "magic grape" was only a medium of the Father's own gift. Some would

tell you that Father Dare should have been a physician of the body, his skill was so great in an emergency and his knowledge of medicine so keen. But whenever this was mentioned to him he quickly turned the conversation.

"Look at Père Angelo," he would say, with a smile on his face. "Think what he did when the scarlet fever swept through the village and neighboring hamlets. Forgetting himself entirely, he worked with all the energy of his strong body in ministering to the sick."

They would all agree to that, but would add: "Father Dare, it was you who always gave the orders and worked like a real doctor, when the doctor himself could not come!"

After all, Father Dare was just simple Father Dare to the little flock who knew and loved him so dearly. His heart was so full of love for them that he stayed on, with little material recompense.

But after eighteen years of deep devotion as priest and friend, five of which were passed quite alone, there came one day a change which caused much wondering and questioning in the village. "Was Father Dare about to bring to the rectory a bride?" There was none good enough for him in Monterre, the men reasoned, but he often was spoken of with men and women of rank and position, for he was a man of learning.

What other solution could there be of such startling innovations in the way of fresh paint and paper in the simple cottage that had known

no change in all these years? And the special trips to Montreal, what did they mean?

At one end of the dining room stood a Chippendale sideboard on which rested a quaint old pewter service. These household treasures Father Dare had brought up from his cellar. Boxes that had not been thought of for years were opened. Some of the choicest pieces of china were returned to their musty cases; but enough were left out to charm the eye of a connoisseur and give to the little room a look of old-time elegance.

IV

But Father Dare did not leave them long in suspense. All his little joys he shared with his people, and now this great happiness he asked his flock to share with him, knowing that by doing so he was gaining even a stronger hold on them, for to be a real comforter one must allow one's friend to give of his heart's love, too. And so the little village could tell you quite as well as Father Dare himself of the home-coming of the very dearest thing on earth to him—the little sister, his pride and joy in early life, when she was left without father or mother in their home in England, followed by a great sorrow in her own life, the result of which had so changed his.

There is in the Canadian nature a strange mingling of native refinement and roughness. These simple people, with all their natural curiosity, would never have thought of penetrating beyond the confidence that Father Dare might give to them. Yet when Father Dare found himself alone, and the Rectory still for the night, his whole being underwent a change. The gentle look the village people knew and loved would give place to the look of a man whose soul's torment was written in his face.

The village was astir with anticipation one June day and eager to welcome the stranger they had

all been taught to care for. Father Dare spoke often of the child-sister as he remembered her. She had seemed to him some fairy creature that had touched this earth by mistake, and it was such a creature he expected to welcome to the little home he had made for her, and not the woman who came to him broken in spirit and body; but her child, a girl of six, was the image of the mother at her age.

The elder Rosamond lived a year, and joy and laughter crept into the little Rectory, and womanly touches gave it grace, because no woman can inhabit a house for even one short year without coloring it for good or evil. This little cottage ever after held for Father Dare a peace, a homeliness, that his sister had given it in twelve short months.

It was after the mother's death that the baby Rosamond had a severe illness which resulted in blindness. Father Dare took her to skilled specialists; all but one said there was no chance of the child ever seeing again. On the slight encouragement given by the last man did Father Dare build his hopes, till at the time of his death it had become almost a certainty to him that before many years her sight would be given back to her. The one operation that could restore it was as yet so new in the scientific world, and so critical, that the oculists looked upon it with doubt.

V

The mother had given to her child the simplicity, the unselfishness, and exquisite grace of movement that were her charm. In the younger Rosamond was added to this a dignity, a poise, rare in a child of her years; and so Father Dare found in his little niece every virtue of the tender, loving sister, with something besides that brought them even closer into perfect companionship, a sprite one moment, a commanding little queen the next, her subjects many; but to Father Dare and Père Angelo her power knew no limit. With Father Dare her love poured itself out in impetuous, childlike fashion. The door of his study was never closed, for about the house Rosamond was quite sure of never making a mis-step.

That she was blind, one at first found it hard to believe, her natural movements were so free and swift and full of grace. Her eyes had not lost their color, the blue of an Italian sky, and as she grew older one began to feel something incongruous between this child of such queenly, yet girlish, bearing, and her simple surroundings among these homely people.

Père Angelo came several days in the week to teach her French and his own language—Italian. With him unconsciously she became her other self. Her mind responded more rapidly to Père

Angelo's teaching than to Father Dare's, and Père Angelo discovered signs of a real student.

Father Dare taught her the ordinary English branches. If she became impatient and willful, the lesson with him often ended abruptly and a long walk or drive came in its place; but then it was that her heart poured forth its torrent of love. With Rex, the dog, on one side, and her beloved uncle on the other, Rosamond became ecstatic with the very joy of living.

Father Dare disliked to have anyone speak to Rosamond of her blindness, and it was never mentioned to her as the most serious of all misfortunes.

"Uncle, darling," she said one day, "when you speak of the blue sky and the green fields, I think I can feel just how they look. Blue is soft and tender, like your voice when you take a baby in your arms and are baptizing it; and green; well, green is cool and full of little voices."

"And how does violet feel to you, little one?" he would ask.

"Violet?" She hesitated before she spoke, with her tiny hands clasped tightly together, "When I say violet then there is something that makes me feel very happy and sad at the same time and, without knowing why, I think of Père Angelo. His voice is very beautiful, Uncle, and sometimes very sad, and that is the way the word makes me feel.

"Père Angelo was singing some strange, weird

music the other afternoon, when John Lee and I walked by just after vespers, and I do believe if John had not been there to call me a baby, I should have cried, it was so beautiful. But, oh! Uncle, darling, you never make me cry; you just make me laugh all the day long." Then she would come and nestle her little head against his shoulder and promise more perfect lessons for the next day.

From Bowman, the trusted housekeeper, confidant and friend to them all, she learned the simple duties of home, and so at the age of eighteen, at the time of her uncle's death, and in spite of her blindness, she was well fitted for almost any station of life.

It was as if Father Dare had planned her education for some special purpose. The village people claimed her as a precious legacy left by Father Dare and never gave a thought to her ever leaving them.

VI

Following a path half hidden on one side by the natural growth of the woods and on the other by a garden showing a limited attempt at cultivation and separated by a stone wall, in that part of the village which at this time was considered quite half-way up the "Mountain," one came to a short flight of steps. Here, a sudden turn revealed a small piece of table-land on which rested a little house. Against a background of rich forest trees, lightened by groups of graceful birches, the yellow and brown cottage made a pleasing picture.

One end of the broad veranda, running across the front of the house, almost touched the branches of a tall oak planted far below. A narrow bridge had been built between the two, and in the fork of the limbs a platform with seats and a tea-table rested. Here a lady and young girl came in the cool of a summer afternoon for tea, and here they were often joined by a guest.

Mrs. Lee had bought this nest in the trees and taken possession of it while the paint was still fresh. A rich Canadian who had just completed it to suit his artistic taste, had lost his wife for whom he built the house in a spot where he hoped her tired nerves would be restored to their proper tone; but he had built too late and the gay young wife died without once having really lived.

Mrs. Lee was a widow with one child, a son,

whose brain was too active for his body. When their Montreal physician ordered absolute rest from study and a certain amount of out-door life and work for the boy, just as he was about to enter college, this place presented itself to her. It seemed so rich in every life-giving quality that she would gladly have come here with her child even if it had proved still more isolated.

The little household consisted of mother and son and her young unmarried sister, with two faithful servants, a man and his wife.

Mrs. Lee had been in the cottage two years when Father Dare died—two years that had proved for her boy all that she could wish and, for herself, much that was never spoken. A warm friendship had sprung up between the two families.

In the church Mrs. Lee and her sister became active and useful members. Once, when Father Dare asked her how she became so quickly at home among these simple, hard-working folk, she, who had graced many a brilliant drawing-room, said, as the color deepened in her violet eyes: "Father Dare, the step is not so great as you imagine. The only difference is that with the people I am living among now, my truest self comes ever unconsciously to the surface, while before I was always trying to hide it."

Her forty years had touched her so gently that no one could think of her as the mother of the tall boy constantly at her side. Her slight reserve

with strangers only added to her other attractions. She gave herself graciously to all, but for the inner circle of her friends she kept a subtle charm and piquancy that gave her the claim of being beautiful, though with no claim to real beauty of features.

She graced this little home as she might have graced a palace, and gave to each daily duty a joyousness that was not lost on the weary parson, who called the house his haven of rest. Many a peaceful hour on a summer evening after a hard day, he spent up in this leafy bower.

Rosamond always came with him, but she was soon carried off by John and his attractive young aunt; and then the two older people were left to themselves.

Mrs. Lee could talk well on many subjects, but she also knew the power of silence, and so the weary man, harassed by the cares of his people and their sorrows, came often and drank deep at the very fountain of peace. Summer breezes and the whispering of a hermit thrush to his mate, many times were the only sounds to break the silence.

In winter once a week Father Dare and Rosamond came to dinner, John going to fetch Rosamond in the early morning. Mrs. Lee had discovered that Rosamond had a naturally attractive voice and one day she suggested that her sister Doris, whose voice had been highly trained, should give her lessons, but that they should be

kept a secret from Father Dare until she had learned some favorite songs of his.

The delight at the thought was almost too much for Rosamond to keep it secret; but she succeeded, and practised faithfully for an hour every day she spent with the Lees,—with Doris by her side.

The day of the great surprise to Father Dare had been planned for some weeks. Rosamond's voice had developed wonderfully in these months of really hard work. Father Dare came as usual for the weekly six o'clock dinner. On this eventful night in February "The Nest" was softly lighted upstairs and down when Father Dare arrived. As his great fur coat was lifted from his shoulders and he entered the cozy library, lighted with soft rose-colored candles and shades, and fragrant with the odor of hot-house flowers, he paused on the threshold.

"Have I entered fairyland by mistake?" he exclaimed. "And are you the fairy princess?" He took Mrs. Lee's offered hand as she rose from her desk and came toward him.

She had on a gown of heavy, clinging, white crêpe. Her dark brown hair was parted and drawn back simply from her brow and gathered into a knot low on her neck. The only color about her was the one red rose in her hair and the rosy glow spreading across her gown from the open fire by her side. A gold cross of exquisite workmanship, surmounted by jewels, and

attached to a slender gold chain, fell below her waist.

For an instant Father Dare forgot himself. "You are very beautiful tonight, Mrs. Lee," he said simply, as he looked into her deep serious eyes.

She let her hand rest a moment in his as she answered, "I am very happy tonight, and don't you think happiness is always a beautifier?"

She turned away as she said this and a quick color came to her face. Was it the reflected light from the burning logs? Father Dare saw and pondered.

Soon after Doris came to greet Father Dare, with Rosamond on her arm, followed by John, a trio often seen together. The two girls were also dressed in white.

"Do tell me, little one," he said as he took his niece in his arms, "is this some great fête day not down on my Calendar?"

And before Rosamond could answer, John had put his strong arms about his mother's shoulder, saying:

"Fête day! It is the Queen's Birthday, and we are going to drink her health in real champagne at dinner! My mother!" He lifted an imaginary glass high in the air, then brought it to his lips with a boyish smack.

"Now," said Mrs. Lee, after dinner, as they returned to the library, "we will have some music

and, as the voice to me is always more attractive when not too near, let us sit here by the firelight while Doris goes to the piano in the drawing-room."

Father Dare and Mrs. Lee drew up their chairs to the fire and awaited the song that seemed long in coming. In its place were such outbursts of laughter that at last Mrs. Lee rose saying that she was going to demand that song at any price; but before she could leave her chair, a voice came to them so rich and beautiful of cadence that Father Dare started to his feet. He caught the first words of "My mother bids me bind my hair," a song his mother had often sung, and a great favorite of his, as he had once told Rosamond.

"Your sister?" he whispered as the last note was finished.

"No, Father Dare, your niece," Mrs. Lee said gently.

As the two drove home, later than usual that night, Father Dare, taking one of Rosamond's little mittened hands in his, said with a trembling voice, "Darling, you have made me happier tonight than I can ever tell you."

"But, why, uncle dear, did you take it so seriously? I thought you would laugh over it and be happy, and wonder how your little Rosamond could ever have kept a secret from you so long!"

"I am happy, little one, so happy that it is almost pain."

VII

Although Father Dare often spoke to Mrs. Lee of Père Angelo, it was many months before she met him. Père Angelo gave himself up so entirely to his work and the poor in his parish that, with the exception of the Rectory, he went almost nowhere else, always declining Father Dare's invitations to go with him to Montreal or Quebec.

"Do bring that poor hardworking priest up to the Nest," Mrs. Lee said one day to Father Dare, "and if he would know what to do with a cup of afternoon tea, let me give it to him. How tired he must be, continually hearing confessions and reading his breviary,—and tell me what to talk about to him," she roguishly added, "or I shall shock him with my worldly conversation."

"He will find pleasure in whatever it may please you to say to him," Father Dare responded gallantly.

Before, when Father Dare had asked Père Angelo to call on Mrs. Lee with him, he had made some excuse, but now, after hearing Rosamond sing at the Rectory, he did not decline the next invitation, saying that he would like personally to thank the sister who had done so much for his little friend.

Père Angelo's one luxury in his plainly appointed home was a piano; and in it with a voice of rare culture, which he used for the pleasure of

his simple, and often ignorant, people,—he found his one recreation.

The afternoon set for the call was late in June and Mrs. Lee had planned a little more than usual for these two “hardworking men.” The luncheon was to be served in the “tree.” The little table, set with snowy damask and choice silver and glass, looked very enticing on this warm afternoon.

In the centre, in a low cut-glass bowl, wild strawberries were piled high on cool green leaves. The thin slices of bread were spread with golden butter. A white and gold pitcher filled to the brim with cool, rich cream was placed at one end, and later, when they went into the house for some music, ices and little cakes were to be served. All this was surely worth coming up the hill for, if no other attraction awaited them.

Mrs. Lee had placed on the table some old and interesting pieces of china from her cabinet. When Doris asked her how she dared run the risk of their being broken, she said with a laugh,—“It will be something to talk about, something that cannot possibly shock this good, simple, pious, country priest. I will give him an historical account of every piece of china on the table. Father Dare tells me that he seldom goes outside of his own parish.”

She said all this to Doris but, in her heart, she did not know why she did it herself. She had a vague feeling which she could not understand, a

desire to appear before this simple-minded Père Angelo more worldly than she really was. Father Dare was ever talking of Père Angelo's life of unselfishness, and she almost resented his love for him.

Mrs. Lee was on the veranda as they approached, a new novel lying unread in her lap. Doris, at the piano, was singing something from a light opera.

"What a contrast all this is to Père Angelo's daily life," she said to herself as she rose to greet them. And when she extended her hand to Father Dare, her manner suggested more the woman of the world than he had ever seen before.

"Mrs. Lee," Father Dare said, as he lifted his hat with an old-time courtesy, "I have brought Père Angelo to the sunshine of your home."

Père Angelo came forward with his berretta in his hand and with the grace of a courtier. "Madame," he said, and his voice was rich and full of music, "Father Dare did not tell me that Eden-land lies only a couple of miles from Monterre!"

For once Mrs. Lee's self-possession came near deserting her. Was this man, whose presence might have graced any salon and who, in this one moment, had sent her back to days and places where courtliness of manner was worn as easily as a garment—was this man just a country priest, in a little Canadian village?

Père Angelo unconsciously laid aside for the

moment the manner his people knew him by, for something in the woman compelled him. Father Dare watched him with absorbing interest. It was as if Père Angelo had been starving for the very thing he was now gazing upon,—the sight of human beings of his own station in life, whose surroundings placed him at once in his true setting.

They had both too evidently mingled with the graces of life, where breeding comes to the rescue of awkward situations, to let this embarrassment last more than a minute.

Mrs. Lee turned, leading the way to the tea-table where Doris sat in her gown of sea-foam muslin, looking like a wood nymph. And then no longer was there any self-consciousness on the part of Mrs. Lee as she led the conversation into pleasant, restful paths.

With genuine enthusiasm Père Angelo admired the quaint little house, the rare natural beauty surrounding it, and the view from the veranda—a stretch of many miles of lake, meeting the horizon in commanding mountain peaks.

"It is the Como of America," he exclaimed.

They talked of Italy, his own country, and Rome where Mrs. Lee had once lived,—and then it was that Père Angelo became reticent.

"Canada is my adopted home," he said earnestly.

From the tea-table hidden in the bower of green leaves they went into the house all dark and cool

and fragrant, and there the ices and cakes were brought, while Doris sang a gay little Italian song.

"Père Angelo," Mrs. Lee said later, "my boy tells me that more than once in passing your door such music has come to his ears as has made him stop to listen. May we have the pleasure of hearing that same voice now?"

With a little impulsive gesture and without hesitation, he went to the piano and sang some verses that he himself had lately set to music,—a sort of chant:—

"Bird of my heart
Deep in the woods thou pipest
Where the sweet wild things grow,
Where trillium and hepatica may blow,
In peace, content, apart
Sweet, sweet Canada, Canada, Canada!

"Sweet piper, thou
Out of thy home remote
Whistle and lift thy flute-like song,
Pipe it clearly and pipe it long.
Carol again
Sweet, sweet Canada, Canada, Canada!"

As he finished the last note a tenderness and sadness came into his voice, not to be noticed perhaps by the ordinary person; but on Mrs. Lee, herself attuned to fine sensibilities, it was not lost.

The song itself was so plaintive and far-reaching as Père Angelo sang it, that it made the spoken word of praise impossible and unnecessary.

"Your adopted home, Père Angelo," said Mrs. Lee, as she lifted her sweet face to him, "must

be very dear to you or you could never have sung that song as you did."

"Indeed it is, Madame," he said seriously, then touching his heart with his hand, he said in a lighter tone, "but open my heart and you will see graven upon it—Italy."

VIII

Many things had Father Dare to think about that night as he sat on his porch alone, long after the village had put out its last light.

Now and then a whippoorwill would bring him back to the present moment but, much as he ordinarily disliked their night-song, he was indifferent to it now.

He had at last accomplished what he had so long worked for, the meeting of Mary Lee and Père Angelo. He knew that Père Angelo would find in this woman tastes corresponding to his own, and the time might come when he would need her real friendship in helping him to carry out a serious problem.

Father Dare had lately had a foreboding that he was not long for this world and there were many things for him to arrange before that hour should come.

That Mrs. Lee would understand Père Angelo there could be no question. That she appreciated his intellect and culture he had seen at once. But she had yet to discover the breadth and depth of his soul and heart. It was that which drew so many outside of his own parish to him for counsel and encouragement.

The very human side of Père Angelo's nature had helped, not hindered, his spiritual growth. He had helped many a world-stained soul to put

under subjection his lower nature and had sent him back into the world no longer a weakling. It was because he himself fully understood man's dual nature that he was able to help those who came to him.

When at last Father Dare rose from his seat it was no longer with weariness of limb; the troubled look had gone from his face and in its place had come a quiet expression of purpose which often marks the beginning of much peace of mind.

He paused as he entered the house, to look back at the lake, all still and unperturbed, and he breathed deep of the pure night air, and the night wind blew through his hair and cooled his brain.

As he passed Rosamond's room on the way to his own, he again paused. The child was asleep and he bent down and kissed the tiny hand and moist brow; then he knelt silently by her bed and prayed long and earnestly. When he reached his own chamber it was not to go to bed. He went directly to a little writing table and wrote far into the morning; the next night he did the same, and the next, and the next, until at last he finished his task.

On the larger of the two envelopes, in which he placed many pages of closely written sheets, he wrote simply:

FOR PERE ANGELO
MONTERRE, P. Q.

Inside this envelope was still another, also addressed to Père Angelo, and below this was written:—

“To be opened and read by Père Angelo on one condition, the recovery of the sight of my niece Rosamond. If the operation on her eyes proves not successful, the envelope is to be burned unopened by Père Angelo himself and, in case of his death before the operation, I request the destruction of the package unopened by any one else.

ERNEST HUNTINGTON DARE.”

The other envelope was smaller and addressed to—

MRS. MARY LEE
MONTERRE, P. Q.

From this time until his death those who knew Father Dare observed a change in him. It was as if a great burden had been lifted from his shoulders and he gave himself up more eagerly to the small pleasures that came in his path.

Rumor was beginning to couple the names of Mrs. Lee and Father Dare, but if this rumor ever came to their ears they took no notice of it. The same friendly intercourse was kept up between the two families, and no longer was Père Angelo a stranger at “The Nest.” Often by invitation he joined Father Dare and Rosamond at their regular weekly dinner, nor was it a surprising thing for him to come now uninvited. If he found the ladies busy he wandered to the piano. In its very touch did he find pleasure and when, quite forgetting

all else, inspired by the exquisite instrument so precious to Mrs. Lee, he sat down and touched it with his sensitive hands he brought forth from it such tenderness as Mrs. Lee had never heard it yield before. He would sing snatches from half-forgotten airs, and then a fragment from some old Italian opera.

One afternoon Mrs. Lee came quietly into the room as Père Angelo was singing Stradella's Prayer—"Pietà signore." His face silhouetted against the curtain, with head thrown back, showed a contour of poetic beauty. His rich baritone voice was giving itself out in perfect abandon. She stopped, spell-bound, for she recognized the keen poetic instinct and special artistic finish that gave the song a yearning tenderness.

She waited until he had finished before coming toward him, and the tears that flooded her eyes she did not try to hide.

"Oh, Mrs. Lee," exclaimed Père Angelo, and there was embarrassment in his manner as he rose quickly to his feet as if he had been discovered violating some priestly vow. He had entirely lost himself in his music for the moment.

"Where have I been and what have I been doing all this time?" His face was white with intense emotion.

"You have been teaching me, Père Angelo, that true religion and real music are very closely akin."

"Doris," said Mrs. Lee to her sister one evening

after her guests had gone, "Can you believe that we have been entertaining just two country parsons at dinner? I feel as I used to after dining at the Governor-General's table with all the sparkle of conversation and champagne."

"You don't have to bring out your old china now, Mary dear, for a subject for conversation," Doris said with a twinkle in her eye.

"And to think that Père Angelo knows more about art of every kind than I ever dreamed of," continued Mrs. Lee. "He must have known the world very well before he ever entered the priesthood. Sometimes I wonder if Father Dare knows more about him than he tells us."

"I never saw you more radiant than you were tonight, dear," Doris said gently. "I just sat and drank it all in."

"But your silence, Doris, is always so telling, and when you do say anything it is worth the saying; everyone stops to hear."

At this moment John entered the room and, hearing the last of the conversation, said, as he put his hand caressingly on his mother's hair: "It's awfully hard sometimes to live up to you and Aunt Dory, but, by Jove! I will do it. I am so proud of you both!"

IX

The two years already passed in Monterre had shown to John Lee many wonderful things he had never dreamed of before. His father, who had died when he was still a lad, had left in trust for his son what would hold no claim to a fortune in this day when rich men count theirs by millions, but enough to give him a liberal education and start him on life's work, as best suited his taste, without the hindrance of financial drawbacks; but John's delicate constitution and too active mind had proved unequal to the task. The first year of his life in "The Nest" he was not allowed to look into a book, though in other ways he made rapid strides. Mother Earth became his friend and the kind Rector his teacher. He became as much interested in the grapery as Father Dare himself. New books on grape culture were eagerly studied by the two and sometimes a choice specimen that Father Dare thought too expensive to order, much as he wanted it, was unexpectedly left at the Rectory, sent from some well-known grower. Father Dare would try to check the boy's enthusiastic generosity, but without avail.

"I am going to invent a grape of my own," John announced one day to Rosamond; "and I know what I am going to name it, too," he added.

"Is it a pretty name?" Rosamond asked demurely, as she turned her queenly little head from him.

"Well, rather," he said in an indifferent manner. "I will tell you some day; and it is going to be a 'Magic Grape'," he called back as he walked off.

At the end of the second year John had grown deep-chested and broad-shouldered, and there was no longer any reason for his spending another winter in the country. He went to Montreal to make arrangements for the fall term at college and brought back with him Dr. Russell, a young physician from the States and the son of an old friend of his father's. By him Father Dare was told more about the wonderful eye operation that no longer was deemed an experiment but already was being accepted by the prominent oculists as a cure in many cases.

Dr. Russell lingered in Monterre longer than he had expected, and became a guest at the rectory.

X

One day, some weeks after Dr. Russell had made his last visit at the rectory, and not long before his return to his western home, John and his mother were sitting together in their library. John was busy over some preliminary college work. His mother and Doris were planning to spend the coming winter at "The Nest," their loneliness to be broken by John's weekly visits and by the visit of any of his friends whom he chose to bring home with him.

Mrs. Lee, sitting by the open window, her sewing basket at her side, had let her work fall from her lap and was idly watching some little sailboats hurrying across the lake. The wind was tossing the tree tops and bringing to her the sweet aromatic odors of the damp woods not far away.

The clouds were gathering, capping the mountains across the lake with a gray mist. Nature at that moment touched a similar chord of sadness and unrest in her own heart. The two peaceful years were coming to an end, and her boy for the first time was about to leave her. Two years of simple, joyous living, with an understanding of life such as it had never been her privilege before to experience! Her husband had adored her and the few years of their living together had been happy and varied. Her attractive personality and culture, together with

his honest, frank nature and wealth, had made the pleasures of life easily attainable.

She had thought her life complete and rounded then. She realized now that that was only a small part of it; and she must come to a little country village and be taught by two godly men before she understood life.

She was in the midst of this reverie when John came quietly over to her. She felt his manly strength as he put his arm around her and looked down into her eyes with his own, so true and honest. He, too, had felt the influence of these two years.

"Mother," he said in his clear and sympathetic voice, "I want to marry Rosamond!"

She looked up to see if this was just a boyish thought of the moment, but the look in his face told her otherwise.

He did not wait for her to speak but continued a little more rapidly, as if answering her thought: "I have been thinking of this a long time, Mother, and now that I am going up to college, I want to say something to her; and, besides, there is another reason," and he hesitated.

"Little Rosamond may not care for you, dear," his mother said.

"I have thought of all that, Mother, too. Mother, I don't like Roland Russell and I don't believe Père Angelo likes him either," he added, as if that was the most convincing of all arguments.

Although Mrs. Lee did not say so, John was only echoing a similar feeling in her own heart. From the first time she had seen Dr. Russell she had distrusted him,—not his ability as a physician, for that was established, but as a man of high moral standard. Exquisite alike in manner and dress, and possessing a tact that might better be called diplomacy, she always felt in his presence something that made her distrust him. The very things that in another man would have attracted her, in him irritated her. Once when asked by Doris why she always received him on the veranda when she could, she said, without answering her question directly: “There are some tropical plants whose blossoms exhale a perfume too powerful for the house.”

She was happy to note the indifference with which Doris accepted his attentions but she could see that he was not used to the rebuffs of woman.

“I have heard stories about him,” continued John, “that I have not cared to believe. He appeared a decent sort of chap when I met him in Montreal at his cousin’s, but down here he has seemed changed. I was mighty glad Aunt Doris didn’t get fooled, but now he is playing a little game with Rosamond; and so what I want is just the right to tell him to clear out and not come back again.”

Mrs. Lee was a wise woman and she treated what he said with serious attention. He was ever ready to talk things over with his mother because,

as he told Father Dare, "Mother always lets a fellow have his say and then if she doesn't agree with him, she argues like a man."

"The highest compliment you can pay a woman, I am sure, John," Father Dare had answered with a smile.

"You see, Mother," he continued, "I should not think of getting married for a long time."

"No, dear, of course not," she replied.

"And, Mother, Rosamond could be with you a lot; perhaps part of the time while I am away, you and Aunt Doris might go down to the rectory and stay for awhile. I am sure Father Dare would like to have you, and Rosamond has often told me that she wished you were her mother. Bowman told her once that, next to her young mistress, Rosamond's mother, you were the first real lady she has seen since she left England."

Mrs. Lee passed over this ingenuous word of praise. She took her boy's hand and laid her soft cheek against it. His earnestness amused her, as well as touched her heart; for she knew that more likely than not many another love story might he tell before he placed on some woman's hand that tiny golden band, the gateway to a garden fragrant with the perfume of love, or a wilderness where grow only weeds of selfish passion.

That Rosamond was poor made no difference. John would have enough for two; no mother anxious for her son's future could have chosen a girl of finer instinct or more amiable disposition.

But she was blind, and Mrs. Lee had grave doubts whether she would ever regain her sight.

The two sat silent for some time, as they often did after one of their serious talks; and the rain came splashing against the window pane. The lake had entirely disappeared in the mist. Nature had drawn her curtain and shut out the world. Mother and son were understanding each other as never before.

"Have you considered, dear," she said at last, "that Rosamond's operation may not be successful and that a blind wife would be a drawback to you in many ways?"

"It is Rosamond I want, Mother, and her heart and soul have sight, even if her eyes have not."

Mrs. Lee listened and wondered. Under her very eyes her child had become a man, and not until this moment of close communion had she realized it. That primitive thing called love had surely entered into his being, but she was sorry to find that it had not come alone—jealousy had also crept in.

"Have you ever spoken of all this to Father Dare?" Mrs. Lee asked. The boy looked up amazed, and then she realized what a boy he was after all.

"You are my confidant, Mother. Not even to Father Dare could I speak first."

And before the rain was over and the sun was out again, many subjects dear to those two had been discussed.

XI

Again the grapery was yielding a rich harvest, the last Father Dare was ever to enjoy. He had built a glass house over a great rock that projected from a grassy hill on his land, and here he watched with pride the perfect clusters of the Black Hamburgs and white hot-house grapes that John had ordered sent to him as something especially choice. This was their first bearing.

"John," he said one day as the two were watching the ripening fruit, "look at all the extravagance you have led me into. The money I have spent in building this little hot-house would have gone a long way towards the bell fund for the church."

"Oh, never mind that," John answered. Then coming nearer to Father Dare and putting his hand on his shoulder in a familiar yet reverent way, he said: "There is something I have wanted to ask you! May I, before I leave for college, give the bell to the little church?" And before Father Dare, with tears springing to his eyes, could answer, John continued: "You see, Father Dare, I should never have been what I am now if it had not been for you. Of course I know I can never repay you for all you have done for me. I am not what you would call a religious fellow," he added, as if fearing that the good man might

discover more in his boyish reticence than he dared show him.

But Father Dare had long since read below the surface, and he felt sure that the foundation of a noble life had already been laid.

"I have often heard you say that a chime for the church, small as it is, was your dream—a chime so sweet and far-reaching that the bells could be heard across the lake, and so compelling that they would just ring the people into church; but if you could not have the chime, a clear, sweet-toned bell would satisfy you. Sometime, Father Dare, I will give the chime, but now I can give only the bell."

Father Dare took the boy's hands in both of his. It was more than the offer itself that touched his heart.

"Have you talked this over with your mother?" he asked.

"No, not yet," John answered in an inconsequent tone. "You see, Mother and I have always so much to talk over,—and the last time it was a matter of far greater importance than even this. But I am sure she will say yes. She almost always does. Besides, she couldn't say no to anything reasonable just now, for I am going to give up smoking for six months, just to please her.

"I have it, Father Dare, I have it ready in the bank to draw out at any moment. My very own, to do with exactly as I choose.

"Now," he added, as if making a sort of confession, "I shall spend less money in furnishing my college room, but every Sunday I shall hear the bell calling the villagers to service, even if I am not here. Rosamond will have to be on time now! Do you think she will like it?" John turned quickly away to hide the color that came into his face.

"Rosamond will be beside herself with joy," Father Dare said. "It was only yesterday that she said she never could get ready in time for service until the church had a bell."

"Let's surprise her," John exclaimed.

"It shall be the loveliest tone that ever called the loveliest maid to church," he murmured to himself as he went off.

Mrs. Lee was consulted and approved, for she also read beneath the surface, and knew that this meant to John the curtailing of many things dear to the boy's heart.

Before John went to Montreal, the bell was already planned for; all was to be kept a secret from Rosamond, until it should ring out its first tuneful message.

How little they realized that the bell's first notes were to be for the funeral of Father Dare!

XII

Before Dr. Russell returned to his western home, his attention to Rosamond was so apparent that even Father Dare was a little disturbed, though he reasoned to himself that it was all because of his professional interest. But Père Angelo, with his more worldly insight, disapproved of him altogether and did not hesitate to say to Father Dare that he was glad Dr. Russell was about to leave Monterre.

A listlessness had grown on Rosamond, quite foreign to a usual exuberance of spirit that took no thought beyond the present happy moment. Dr. Russell's brilliancy and knowledge of the ways of the world attracted her as she had never been attracted by John Lee and his frank, honest ways.

The doctor took her on long walks and interested her with thrilling tales of western life; a world all unknown to her before and, because of her vivid imagination, doubly fascinating.

That he praised her beauty, Bowman discovered with disgust one day when Rosamond came to her and said:

"Am I very beautiful, Bowman?"

"I used to tell you that you were the plainest little girl that ever lived, when you were naughty," Bowman replied with caution.

"But am I beautiful now? Dr. Russell says that New York girls would give anything to have

my face and figure and some day he will make his friends envious by introducing me to them. Oh! I hope I am beautiful," she added as if half to herself.

"Dr. Russell is not a nice man to say such things to you, Miss Rosamond," Bowman said in an angry tone. "You are just a little simple country girl the Doctor will forget as soon as he leaves Monterre."

"No, he will never forget me!" she cried in a hurt tone. "He said he never would, and he is going to write to me often and tell me about more wonderful things he will see and do when he goes home."

Bowman, with her usual tact, did not repeat this conversation to Father Dare until after the doctor's departure.

It deeply hurt John to see the change that had come over Rosamond when she was with him. She was still the sweet, devoted little companion and sister; but with Roland Russell she became almost brilliant at times, responding to his repartee and ready wit with an easy grace that made her seem no longer a child to those who looked on, but years older than she had been only a few months before.

When Rosamond knew he was coming to call, Bowman found it hard to please her young mistress, so docile at other times. Indifferent before to dress, now she insisted on having on her "prettiest frock."

She was on the veranda one afternoon as the doctor walked up the path, a noticeable figure, tall and graceful in his negligèe suit of white flannels, his handsome Van Dyke beard trimmed close. More than one woman of his acquaintance would have given worlds to have the attention he was giving at the present moment to this young blind girl.

He paused on the first step to watch her as she was reaching up to a climbing rose-bush, full of shell-pink blossoms. In trying to break off a cluster and place it in her hair, the thorns had buried themselves in her hand and drawn blood, but even this look of pain that passed over her face did not hurry him to her assistance. He was fascinated by her beauty in its picturesque setting.

"The prettiest girl I have seen for many a year," he thought, "and the best educated, too."

He revelled in her perfect figure, her exquisite throat, and the queenly head so nobly placed.

"What a pity she is blind—and only a poor country girl!"

Then he lifted the cane he held in his hand and gave it a whirl over his head, as he muttered: "You don't mean to say, Roland Russell, that you, who have had so many women at your feet, are for the first time experiencing a sensation at your heart that you have never felt before!"

"Bowman, dear, come here and fasten these roses in my hair," Rosamond was calling as the doctor approached.

"Why call Bowman, Miss Rosamond? May I not perform a surgical operation on the roses, before another thorn enters into your flesh, and then place them in the most becoming spot in your hair, just over the left ear?"

"Oh, Dr. Russell," Rosamond exclaimed as she turned toward him, one shapely hand holding the cluster of roses. "If you are very sure you can find the most becoming place, I will let you!"

"I have had practice enough in this sort of thing," he was thinking, as he took the fragrant cluster of tiny roses from her hand, but just as he was about to lift that small hand to his lips, saying: "You could make me an apt scholar, Miss Rosamond," a sudden knock on his arm sent the flowers to the ground.

Before he could pick them up, John, with a very faint apology for his awkwardness in not seeing him as he turned the corner of the veranda, stooped down and picked them up himself.

Bowman just then appearing at the door in answer to Rosamond's call, he gave them to her, saying: "Miss Rosamond called you to place these in her hair, Bowman. Men have no knack at that sort of thing."

From that moment the two men understood and hated each other.

Dr. Russell had played with love and passion as he played a game of cards, with indifference as to the result, knowing that always there was another chance; but he left Monterre and Rosa-

mond with a more genuine feeling of regret than he had ever felt before. He knew, too, and was not sorry, that Rosamond would not soon forget him.

As all Rosamond's letters must be read by some one else, Dr. Russell wrote most impersonal ones, but he knew that between the lines she would read all that he wished. He was not fine enough to think or care what the consequences might mean if her heart was really touched.

After his return home and in spite of his busy hospital life, the mail constantly brought letters from him which, in her queer little handwriting, she was able to answer herself.

But at the time John was ready to go to college, the letters came less frequently and later ceased altogether.

It was with a troubled heart that John watched Rosamond on the eve of his going away, for he could see as well as others that she was far from happy, and he was honest enough with himself to realize that it was not because he was leaving her. So he started for college with his secret untold.

XIII

The past summer had been a full and happy one, and the last that little group of friends was ever to enjoy together. In after years, one day stood out like a gem in a circle of golden memories, and that was an all-day excursion, starting early in the morning in John's fine steam launch, with no thought of returning home until the coolness of the lake compelled. The day proved mild and cloudless, and the little party of ten boarded "The Lark" at an early hour. They were to land at the foot of a grand old mountain that rises abruptly from the lake and stretches itself in graceful, undulating lines at the top. Those who were inclined to climb the mountain were to do so, while the others rested at the rustic house built in the form of a chalet at the foot. Never did the lake respond more fully to their quiet enjoyment than on this day.

Père Angelo hurried on board as they were about to start, not sure until the last moment that he could join them.

"Our day would not have been complete without you, Père Angelo," Mrs. Lee graciously said as the boat pushed off.

"Such holidays as you give your friends, Madam," he replied, "are a gift from God. They help to make a man more worthy of his duties on the morrow."

From the centre of the broad lake where the

waves were frolicking madly about the sides of the launch, John guided his boat into dark fragrant coves, where the rocks came to the very edge of the water and the overhanging branches nodded to one another and kissed their reflections in the mirror at their feet. Now and then a blue harebell would look out from its hiding place among the damp moss, or a group of maiden-hair ferns wave gracefully to the breeze. Once they made a detour to enter a narrow stream of water called the "lily bed," a carpet of white blossoms with hearts of gold, so beautiful as they rested on their background of green leaves that Père Angelo exclaimed:

"They are the saints among flowers, offering up their exquisite subtle perfume. It is almost a sin for man's rough hand to touch them."

Doris, with John and his friends, had started for a short climb—John, rather against his will, for he wanted to spend this day with Rosamond.

Father Dare and Mrs. Lee had found shelter from the sun under a great rock and were idly watching the little boats on the lake. No spoken word between these two was necessary to cement the perfect understanding that had existed from the very first between them. Père Angelo and Rosamond, with the ever faithful Rex, had gone off to find a brook they heard murmuring and gurgling up among the stones. Here Père Angelo filled Rosamond's hands with blue harebells and the queer little climbing rock fern.

When they returned to the big rock on which was being spread the tempting luncheon, Père Angelo could see that Mrs. Lee and Father Dare were in earnest conversation. The problem that had been of vital interest to this little group in the last year, the plans for bettering the condition of the children in their village—many of them French Canadians—had met with some reverses. Ignorance and vice often go hand in hand, and many of the French children were growing up utterly ignorant.

Doris had offered to teach all the village to sing!

"Who knows but she will find an embryo Patti among them?" Mrs. Lee said laughingly.

Father Dare had made a study of child-life in different countries and as Rosamond and Père Angelo approached, he was speaking of the life of the children in India.

"What do you know about India, Père Angelo?" Mrs. Lee said. "Father Dare declares that our missionaries have not done all the good they should have done in these last years. I hope your church has accomplished more."

"It is capable of doing still greater work among the children," he answered. And then he spoke of the country and its people as only one who knew it could.

That night, after their return, Père Angelo walked home with Father Dare and Rosamond. When they were alone Father Dare said quietly: "I never heard you speak before this afternoon

of your familiarity with India, Père Angelo, and somehow from what you said I was led to feel that you do not love that part of the world."

"You are right, Father Dare,—anything but love. I went there to escape myself and I came very near never returning." Then, as if sorry for the words that had escaped his lips, he continued in an indifferent tone: "I was travelling in India when I met with a severe accident. I was taken unconscious to the hospital and put under the care of an especially fine doctor. He left me in the middle of the night. If it had not been for the remarkable care of the attending nurse, I should not be here now.

"The doctor must have gone suddenly mad, for he disappeared, never to return, and without any known reason. I think I must have had one sane moment, before he left, for I almost think I can see his face as he stooped over me, so tender and sympathetic."

This was the first time Père Angelo had spoken of any incident in his past life.

XIV

Winter had set in earlier than usual this year, throwing a warm, white blanket over the mountain and valley, but an unexpected thaw melted the ice in the lake and not until early in the New Year was it again thick enough for traffic. If the ice had been as firm as usual Father Dare would not have met with his tragic death.

The Christmas holidays brought John Lee home with a number of friends ready for tobogganing and snowshoeing.

John's Christmas gift to Rosamond showed a good deal of originality. Whenever Rosamond went out by herself with Rex she always carried a stout stick that helped her over many a rough place. John had known for some years of an old Swiss wood-carver in Montreal who lived by himself down by the market. He turned out, even yet, unique bits of carving with his knife. John took his design to this man with plenty of time to work it out, and when he went for it the day before he left for home, he was so pleased with the result that after paying him the modest sum he asked for his work, he tossed into his lap a five-dollar note for "a Christmas Gift"—which pleased the old man more than the other.

It was a cane of hard, dark wood, with a surface like satin. On the top, a ball of lighter wood rested and, clinging to this, two exquisite grape-

leaves with the tendrils curling around the upper part of the stick. This was surmounted by a cluster of grapes which served as a handle. A little way down on the cane was carved in tiny lettering: "SEMPER FIDELIS."

John could hardly wait to present his gift to Rosamond. She passed her hand over its soft surface and seemed to feel the beauty that she could not see,—and John's heart was satisfied in her words of loving thanks. But when the motto was read to her, she said softly and half sadly: "Not too faithful, dear." To which he made no answer except by a gentle pressure of her hand as it rested in his.

XV

The little village of Monterre was bathed in grief for many days after Father Dare's funeral.

It was as if the very sunshine had lost its brilliancy.

Rosamond, with Bowman, did not return to the rectory after the burial but went directly with Mrs. Lee to the Nest.

There was a strange, unnatural calmness about the child (for child she still seemed to Mrs. Lee in her helplessness) that disturbed them. She had shed no tears and had hardly spoken, causing the doctor to watch her closely. She would sit with her hand in Mrs. Lee's as if in a stupor, refusing to take any food.

The third night of her stay at the Nest she was heard to give a sudden, quick sob in her sleep. Bowman going to her, she put out her hand and whispered: "Père Angelo! I want my Père Angelo!"

She did not seem to be awake when she uttered this little cry but the next morning Père Angelo was sent for.

Owing to illness in his own parish since Father Dare's funeral, he had not been able to get up to the Nest before.

Rosamond was on the veranda, Rex's great head lying against her arm, when she heard Père Angelo's step. She rose hurriedly to her feet and, stretching out her hands toward him, would have fallen had he not caught her.

"Dear, dear Père Angelo!" she whispered as she laid her head on his breast. "I have wanted you so very much," and, with one great overwhelming sob, the tears at last burst forth unrestrained.

From that instant her hungry little heart was partly quieted and the affection that she had hitherto lavished on her uncle, she offered to him; Père Angelo was not loath to accept the gift.

The letter which had been found in Father Dare's desk was given to Mrs. Lee. "To be opened at once on my decease," was written in one corner of the envelope.

She waited until the house was quiet and the last light extinguished. In the cozy library, where she and Father Dare had passed so many happy hours, she seated herself beside the dying embers and, by the light of the waning candle, opened the letter and read:

"My friend:

It may be one year, it may be many before you read these lines, but I have a foreboding that the time is not long for me here and I dare not wait longer to make of you a request.

It is because of my deep regard, nay, more than I have dared to express, that gives me courage now.

In life, I knew that I must ever be one of those isolated beings on God's earth. In death, I dare to tell you what life has been to me since you came into it.

Will you pay the price of a great friendship—you honored me once by saying that it had meant something to you—and accept my legacy, my Rosamond, with the small income which, if she never regains her sight, will keep her comfortable and happy right here in Monterre? If her sight,

by God's grace, is restored to her, she will then have greater means to draw on; and then, more than ever, do I desire your loving, watchful care, together with Père Angelo's, also a loving friend to our little Rosamond.

Into God's care I commend you both.

Faithfully yours,

ERNEST HUNTINGTON DARE."

The deeps of life are still and the cry of her heart she alone heard.

XVI

The golden grain had again ripened and been harvested; bunches of grapes were hanging heavy and sweet on the vine; before anything definite was known regarding the two oculists who had been looked for all summer in New York. At last the word came that they were to meet in London and consult with some of the noted oculists of Europe. This was a bitter disappointment to Mrs. Lee for she had been waiting anxiously all summer for the time to come when Rosamond could be taken to New York. The great expense of taking Rosamond to London now seemed to Mrs. Lee past all thought of consideration. Father Dare had laid aside what he considered would be necessary for the operation, a generous amount, but Mrs. Lee realized that the cost would be greatly increased by taking her to London and giving her the comforts needed there.

Mrs. Lee had talked it over with Père Angelo. All plans for Rosamond were now considered by the two, before being acted upon. She would have been helpless without his wise judgment.

Late one evening Père Angelo came hurrying to the Nest. In his hand he held a letter which, with less ceremony than usual, he put into Mrs. Lee's hands, and then dropped wearily into a chair. The letter was from one of the New York physicians saying that he was to sail in a month

to be in London on a certain date to meet the other doctors; and then it was decided that if the young blind girl could arrange to be in London the last of December, everything would be in readiness to receive her.

Mrs. Lee read it through twice and then handed it back to Père Angelo with tears streaming down her face.

"And we cannot do it, Père Angelo!" she cried. "This one last wish of Father Dare's—the thing he had prayed and waited for so patiently! I cannot, cannot bear it!"

And for the first time Père Angelo saw her give way entirely.

"My friend, we will do it! Father Dare's wish shall be carried out to the letter. Listen to me while I tell you how. I have in my keeping a fund left in trust to do with at any moment exactly as I see fit. It is a fund of no small proportions and I send the yearly income from it to many parts of the world. It has been sent forth on strange errands, but none will be more blessed, I am sure, than the sum I shall put into your hands to use as you see fit."

Then, with wise tact, he quickly turned to the practical side, as if the other was already settled.

"And whom shall we send with her? Bowman, of course, and why not you, also, Mrs. Lee? You are yourself needing a change and I do not like to think of Rosamond without one of us," and his face lighted up with one of his rare smiles.

So it was decided that Rosamond, with her companions, should plan to be in England at the appointed time.

With every outward appearance of hope, there were many misgivings in the hearts of those to whom it meant so much. Rosamond alone did not apprehend, for she did not understand the consequences.

Parting with Père Angelo and Rex was the one sad note; otherwise she was glad to get away from Monterre for a few months. Much to John's delight she insisted on taking with her the "magic cane," as she called it.

Her parting with John was sisterly and tender, but there was always something in her manner that made it impossible for him to speak of the thing that lay nearest his heart.

Mrs. Lee did not close The Nest, but left it open for Doris and John to use whenever they liked. Père Angelo felt a loneliness in his daily life, after their departure, that he did not like to put into words; and he worked with more energy than ever among his people. The sweet, human fellowship that had entered into his life since this little group of friends had become so dear to him, might be the very part of life that he was supposed to have renounced.

Those at home waited with feverish anxiety the result of the operation, and it was a day of wide rejoicing in the village when word came that the first operation had been most successful, but

the one which was to follow could not be undertaken for some months; in the mean while, Rosamond was to stay in a darkened room the greater part of the time.

The package left by Father Dare had been given Père Angelo but, as yet, the moment had not come to open it. "Would it ever come?" he questioned himself.

XVII

Père Angelo sat alone in his bare, dimly-lighted room. Before him lay the unopened manuscript. After two years Rosamond was still in Europe, but no longer blind, for the final operation had been a success.

Mrs. Lee had just returned home, impatient at the last to see her little family. She had been with Père Angelo all the afternoon, giving him a detailed account of many incidents that had occurred in the past two years.

Père Angelo was particularly interested in what she told him of Rosamond's first impression of the world as she opened her eyes on it; and it did not surprise him that with the joy of sight came also a certain fear and awe that it took some time to overcome. Often Mrs. Lee would find her with eyes closed, as if wearied by the strange forms surrounding her. Before Mrs. Lee left Père Angelo, she handed him a letter written by Rosamond in the same cramped, awkward penmanship of the blind girl. It began:

"Can you understand me when I tell you that, in spite of my joy at seeing, the world, as I looked upon it first, frightened me and I closed my eyes to be able to think, just as I used to.

The busy, excited world that I am looking upon for the first time, does it ever close its eyes to think, too?

I am wondering if life will ever again look so peaceful and happy as in the dear old days with

my precious uncle, and you, and all the dear friends at the Nest.

I have rested so naturally on this network of love and devotion from you all, all these years, and have never until now appreciated what it meant."

Then as if afraid Père Angelo would not think her truly grateful for what had come to her:

"But don't imagine for a moment that I do not appreciate all that you and others have done for me; and I realize too that from now on I am no longer a child, but must take my place among you. No longer the petted Rosamond with every wish gratified, but a woman grown, with growing responsibilities as life goes on, and perhaps, dear Père Angelo, that is, after all, what frightens me.

But with you I must ever be the little girl who needs your watchful care. The very trees have startled me and it was only when I closed my eyes again that they seemed no longer strangers to me, and I could then claim them as my old friends by the rustle of their leaves. And the sky, so wonderful in color and, at times, so far away! I feel again like running away from the great clouds, they seem so near and oppressive. Then I say to myself: 'Now I shall see you and all the beautiful things of which I have only heard before.'

But first, dear Père Angelo, I want to hear your voice before I see you with my eyes. Bowman laughs at me and says people will think I am vain, I spent so much time at first looking at myself in the glass, but I tell her she must remember that I am just getting acquainted with my own face. At first I was surprised and a little disappointed. I like my hair and my nose, but there is something about my mouth that does not please me. A look of discontent, I call it. I shall try to get rid of that before I see you again. You could not have loved that expression and you have had to see it all these years!

Again, my Père Angelo, don't think I am not happy and grateful, as I hope my life will show. I know now what Uncle meant when he used to say 'So happy that it is almost pain.'"

* * * * *

There was an indescribable feeling of fear that came over Père Angelo as he opened the package, after putting down Rosamond's characteristic letter, and read the first lines.

XVIII

"The unfolding of these pages before your eyes means that Rosamond's sight has been given back to her and that now she may take her place in the world, physically as well as mentally equipped; and what that place will be, is yours to decide; for it is not to Père Angelo of Monterre that these words are addressed, but to the father of my sister's child, of the noble House of Orsini."

Père Angelo clutched the table to keep himself from falling from his chair, and bowed his head. When he lifted his face it was ashen pale and it was some minutes before he recovered himself sufficiently to take up the sheet of paper that had slipped from his shaking hand to the floor and, in a voice strange and lifeless, read over again, "The noble House of Orsini," as if forcing his memory to some half-forgotten time.

The words seemed vague and meaningless at first as he continued:

"Read the following pages more than once before you judge yourself or me.

If Rosamond's sight had not been restored to her, I would then have chosen for her the continuation of her life among the simple people of Monterre, whose faithful love would have been her world. But now that cannot be. She must from henceforth choose her own path in life, with you to help her. What you are about to read I had once hoped to say to you, for the spoken word is often softer than the pen; but over your past life you drew a curtain and, as I look back on those years of sweet association with you, I am not sorry that it was so. That your suffering was as great as mine, I understood without the confession.

There lived in a quiet English town a clergyman

with two children,—the son many years older than the daughter. He, to please his father, was studying for the ministry, but after the death of the father, he gave it up for the profession he felt he was more fitted for, that of medicine. Just after he graduated, India called for young men to place in her new hospitals.

He eagerly accepted the position offered him. His only regret was in leaving the little sister, his companion and pride, since the death of both father and mother; but the thought of making for her a home and a future in a strange land gave him courage. Rosamond was to stay with an old, rich aunt, until he should come for her.

The letters from her were the rays of sunshine that touched and brightened his life of hard service and, as he read, he understood that life was growing sweet and full for her, but with no waning of the longing in her heart for the time when she might go to him.

One day came the news of the aunt's sudden death. As she died, leaving no will, Rosamond had not even the legacy promised to her.

The brother not then being able to send for her, Rosamond accepted for the winter a position to teach English to the young daughter of an Italian of rank living in London, and who had often been a guest at her Aunt's house.

The older son of this Italian nobleman was a man of thirty-five, an invalid, while the younger son, several years younger, was strong and of noble bearing. He cared little for the gay life that went on about his father's house, devoting much of his time to music, for which he had a rare talent; and also in profound study of a religious nature.

Rosamond and the young nobleman on whom the father placed his hopes, often met and it was not an infrequent occurrence for him to join the little sister at study-hour.

Dear friend, for such you have been to me for many years, over much that follows, let us draw a veil.

When again Rosamond wrote to her brother, it was to tell him that she was about to leave her present home. It was a short, unnatural letter and, at the end, begging his brotherly forgiveness

if into his life she was ever the cause of bringing any sorrow.

He pondered long and anxiously over this letter, the last he received from her for many months, but from others did he learn the story that plunged him into the depths of anguish. Love had proved stronger than rank or religion and these two had cast aside all else for it.

For my own sake, as well as yours, I cannot linger over this period of suffering,—of the happiness of short duration, of Rosamond and the young nobleman, of the annulling of the marriage vow by order of the father and the Church, of the disappearance of the young and broken-hearted wife, and of the despair of the man, thought then by the brother to be the betrayer of Rosamond's love, and of the bitter hatred in the brother's heart for the young Italian.

The brother, in the meanwhile, was fast making for himself a name. One night while he was on duty two men were brought into the hospital, one dying, the other, seriously injured. They had been in a railway accident many miles away. The two foreigners were brought in a private coach to the hospital nearest at hand.

The dying man lived only a few hours, while the other was placed under the doctor's special care. He worked with unceasing energy, not allowing any one else to do for him, for he knew that this man's life hung by a thread. He told himself that this man lying before him was of no ordinary caste, and that his rank must be higher than the simple Italian name, found on his person, indicated.

The doctor became more and more interested in his patient as he watched the noble-looking young Italian. After many hours of great suffering, a softened expression passed over the patient's countenance and the physician watched the distorted look of anguish give place to more relaxed lines. In his delirium when first brought into the hospital, his Italian was incoherent, with now and then a murmured sentence in perfect English.

The doctor, realizing that there were many chances against his recovery, gave orders that no one should disturb him and that he, with a special nurse, would take charge of the stranger during

the night. It was toward morning, the time when nature is at its lowest ebb, and the stillness to a sensitive being is quite intense as sound.

The doctor had left his patient who lay on his bed, breathing more naturally. As he stood at the open window, looking down upon the waking city, he breathed a prayer of gratitude that this life, so dear to some one, and so necessary, he felt sure, to many, might, after all, be saved, and through him; for he well knew that his skill had come into play this night, if never before.

At that moment a little cry escaped from his patient's lips, and "Rosamond" was repeated many times; then after a silence of some minutes, in the purest English he poured out his heart's story. Once he put out his arms and drew the doctor to him: "Rosamond," he whispered, "Rosamond, my love." With those words, the doctor knew that Rosamond's lover lay before him.

He did not know till afterwards that he had made Rosamond his wedded wife, but only thought of him as the betrayer of his sister's love, the slayer of her happiness.

I was that doctor and you were the noble patient, and at my mercy! At that instant my heart froze within me or it might have been touched by the grief you poured forth. It is only Christ who could have forgiven at that time. Then you fell back in an exhausted sleep and I thought I knew all—all!

In after years I saw how far I was from right. As the clock struck four I gave you the necessary medicine, called the nurse, saying that the danger was over for the present, and asked her to take charge while I went to rest.

I went out of that room, never to return. What intervened between that time and some weeks afterward, has never been clear to me. My mind must have gone for I waked to find myself in a strange hospital. I had a severe fever, from which it took many weeks to recover. Then for the first time my brain became clear and my body restored to its normal condition; and what for weeks had seemed only a bad dream, I now realized was a stern reality. A kind Providence had not allowed my mind to recover itself until my bodily strength was sufficient to endure the awakening to full

consciousness of all that had occurred. When I left you, I alone knew what a small chance there was of your recovery and, without me even less. Although I wrote to England for information regarding my sister, no word of her whereabouts reached me. Of your life I made no inquiries, feeling sure that you could not have lived long after I left you. From that time I thought of myself only as a murderer and my profession grew suddenly hateful to me. Not long after leaving the hospital, I came to America, where I hoped I might banish from my mind the thought that was eating into my soul. But again sickness overcame me and I was sent to a hospital. I was then in the far West. The clergyman who came to see me—a man of rare insight into human lives—cared for me like a brother and later took me to his own home, where he and his wife nursed me back to the life which I should have been glad to escape. I became an inmate at the Rectory for over a year, and at the end of that time had taken Orders; not, however, until I had found out for a certainty that the young Italian had recovered. But, in spite of that I have ever felt that the murder in my heart left a scar on my soul, never to be effaced. Having studied for the ministry early in life, at the instigation of my friend and father confessor, who alone knew my story, I entered the ministry with eagerness, hoping that by a life of renunciation, I might in a measure make amends for this blot on my life.

I worked among the miners and then it was that the first news reached me of my sister and her child. They were living in a small English village with a faithful servant and friend of the family as Rosamond's only companion, and with little to support mother and child. This was the beginning of many revelations.

Rosamond had hidden herself and her child from you as well as myself, as I found later. From now on, my one thought was to find some peaceful parish, with plenty of hard work to do, and there make a home for the little sister, longing, I felt sure for her brother's love and protection. Providence sent me to this little Canadian village, as it also sent you ten years later.

What the consequences might have been, had

you come before my sister's death, I dare not think.

Once seeing you and hearing your voice, I was haunted by both, but not until later was it borne in upon me that the Priest who had come to take the place of the French Father about to return to France was none other than the young Italian whom I deserted in India. It was hard to reconcile the two at first.

You had told me that it was your first parish and how you happened to be sent to this little village so far from your own beautiful Italy, and then it all seemed simple enough to understand and I recalled, too, that before I knew you, you had been a student of religion.

I close this letter with the deepest love and reverence one man may give to another, be he Priest or layman, first asking the forgiveness that your great nature will be sure to grant, and your prayers for my eternal welfare.

The requests that I now make of you are my unspoken dying wishes, to be by you carried out to the letter, my heart tells me.

First: That no one but ourselves shall ever know the contents of this letter.

Second: That Rosamond shall not be told of the relationship in which she stands to you. The curtain which you yourself drew across your early life, it will do no good to draw aside now, either for Rosamond or you.

I beg of you not to thrust your doctrine upon her but, if in later maturity of thought, she should leave her mother's Church for that of her father, of her own free choice, it would not grieve me were I still alive.

Third and last: Having found out that on entering the priesthood and renouncing all personal property for yourself, you still have within touch a large amount of money to use at your discretion for the good of others, I ask of you to make it possible for Rosamond to be made independent for life.

God has given me more than I deserve in these last happy years, preparing me, I hope, for the greater work hereafter, where faith stands above creeds.

ERNEST HUNTINGTON DARE,"

XIX

Although Père Angelo denied it, it was rumored that he was far from well. Mrs. Lee herself, becoming a little anxious, wrote to Rosamond of her anxiety. After reading the letter Rosamond did not wait long before changing her plans and announcing that she should return home at once. The friends with whom she was travelling tried to persuade her to go with them as first planned for a trip of several months before returning, telling her that she might never again have such an opportunity to see the world, but nothing could dissuade her.

She had written to John, asking him if he and Doris would meet her in New York on her arrival, which they did. In the last four years her letters to John had been constant and full of sisterly solicitude but nothing more; and there were times when he read between the lines and felt that she was still keeping a place in her heart for Roland Russell, whom he heard of from time to time but made no effort to meet.

Dr. Russell was making a name for himself in his profession, and in other ways too, that John felt was not in keeping with his profession.

John's college life was over and he had already taken his place among men, but in a different way from what had been planned early in life for him. The seed sown during the two years in

Monterre had borne fruit. He gave up the idea of a profession and took an Agricultural Course at college instead. The rich, untilled Canadian land in the Northwest, with its vast possibilities, fascinated and stimulated his youthful spirit to more active work.

There were times of despondency when Rosamond seemed farther away from him than when she was still blind. He could offer her sufficient of this world's goods, he knew, to satisfy her, but his heart told him that would mean nothing to a woman like Rosamond unless she had love to give him. Not long before her return, he ordered made and sent to her an ornament of significant beauty, a pendant made from exquisitely tinted pearls, from the purest white to the softest pink. On one of the finely chased gold leaves, against which the pearls rested, was a diamond dewdrop, white and clear.

"I am sending you a birthday gift," he wrote, "a little bunch of magic grapes. May it prove your mascot, and I send with it my first and only verse of poetry. I wrote it for you years ago when I gave you the walking stick, but my courage failed me and I did not send it to you. Now I don't mind your laughing at it, or the boy who wrote it, if you will only remember that 'the child is father of the man.' "

And he attached to the box a card, just as he wrote it first, in his firm, clear handwriting:

"If love is worth the giving, dear,
Then sure it's worth the taking, dear;
So take this offering that I make
And treasure it for love's dear sake."

"If you only knew how hard I worked to write those lines, you would be charitable to my boyish muse," he added.

XX

Eighteen years ago Rosamond's mother had come to Monterre quietly and peacefully. How different this Rosamond's return to the same spot. She was a little queen, entering her realm again after a long absence, her subjects ready to do her homage. She was to see them all for the first time with her outward vision,—the Rectory, the stretch of green meadow, and the broad lake beyond; the grape arbor, with the same little table at one end, where breakfast was served once a year; the porch where she and Father Dare sat of a summer's evening,—she devouring the fairy tales he would read to her, "For no child without an imagination," he would say, "will ever get the most out of life." He fed her eager little mind with Grimm's Fairy Tales and Hans Christian Andersen until she was able to make for herself and her companions a little world of gnomes and fairy princesses.

None of the wonders of Europe her eyes had gazed upon gave her the sensation of joy or the quickened heart-beat that the mere thought of her home-coming gave her now. For the first time she realized the full meaning of restored vision. It was these simple, homely sights rather than the great ones, that touched her soul and made her more deeply grateful than she had ever been before. In later years she understood that it is ever so.

John, with Doris at the boat to meet her, was quite as excited as Rosamond. His broad, kindly face was flushed in anticipation.

If for one moment she called him plain, it was forgotten as she laid her hand in his and looked up wistfully into his honest, gray eyes, before she dared to offer him a sisterly kiss. His light brown hair, thrown back by the breeze, revealed a brow serene and thoughtful; and later, when she saw him smile, she frankly called him "handsome."

"To think," she told John afterwards, "that Bowman had to tell me who you were!"

When they reached Monterre, Rosamond was driven to the Nest in the shabby little cart her uncle used to own, with James, the cripple, on the front seat, driving, and Rex, mad with joy, running by her side. Many of the village folk had gathered at the station to greet her. She was deeply touched by it all, but she understood that they were paying this tribute to her uncle's memory quite as much as to herself.

Père Angelo was at the Nest when she drove up, but he did not meet her on the veranda, as did Mrs. Lee and the servants.

"Where is Père Angelo?" she said to Mrs. Lee.

"In the library, dear."

"May I go to him, and alone?" Rosamond asked.

When the two returned to Mrs. Lee some minutes later, there was a look on Père Angelo's face she never forgot. Peace and joy had illuminated it.

XXI

One morning Rosamond awoke to find herself with an independent fortune of her own.

"It was as if some fairy godmother had touched her with her wand," the villagers were saying. A letter had been received from an English banking house, announcing that they were instructed to acquaint her with the fact that a certain sum of money had been given to them in trust for her, the yearly income of which was quite beyond her present comprehension.

The letter went on to say that the fortune had been left to her on the death of an aunt of her father's, who died unmarried and whose love for both her father and mother had never changed. Before her death, the aunt had tried without avail to find her niece, knowing that she was still living, and it was only within a few months that the bank had been informed of her whereabouts.

The one request the aunt made, in leaving this money to Rosamond, was that her own name should be withheld. That Rosamond was never to know anything regarding this Italian aunt, gave her much unhappiness at first. She spoke of it one day to Père Angelo and told him of a conversation she once had with her uncle about her father. Father Dare had told her then that her father and mother had dearly loved each other but that something had happened to separate them in life.

"He talked to me of my mother's sweetness of character."

"And did he tell you that she was beautiful?"
Père Angelo interrupted impulsively.

"Oh, yes, very beautiful, but it was her lovely soul shining through her face, he said, that made her so. My father was very lovely, too," with a little air of proud possession. "At first my uncle said he did not love my father, but later he learned to know him better and then he loved him very dearly. Is it not sad that I may never know him? But dear Uncle said that that must ever be my cross."

Then she took Père Angelo's hand reverently in both of hers, saying simply:

"I think this is one reason of my love for you—you are Italian, too, and so good! I always wear this locket about my neck. My mother wore it while she lived. It has a picture of my father as a young man, inside, painted by a famous artist.

"Was he not handsome and good? I know he must have been," and Rosamond looked up at Père Angelo, her eyes wet with tears as she closed the tiny case.

"I have never shown it to any one before," she whispered, "not even to Mrs. Lee." Père Angelo took the little gold locket that he himself had given her mother and gazed long and silently on his own face. One suppressed sob escaped his lips; but when he gave it back to her his eyes were tearless.

It was John Lee, of all Rosamond's many friends, who offered no congratulations.

At first she took no notice of it but, after giving him every possible opportunity when she was alone with him, she asked him frankly one day if he did not rejoice with her in all this that had come so unexpectedly to her.

He rose and came over to the sofa where she was sitting in his mother's cozy sun-parlor. He was dazzled at that moment by her unconscious beauty and dignity. Her face had an earnest, troubled expression. To him her thoughtful moments were always of peculiar charm. Even in her merriest moods one felt the deep current of her nature ever flowing below the surface. The very lines of her body spoke of inherited grace and power. But she had no "power" this time to soften his answer.

"Shall I speak straight from the heart?" he said roughly, and he took her hand in his.

"No, I do not. I know you do not love me as you love Roland Russell, but I thought that in time you might forget that man and then, even if you could not return my love, you might have some affection for me and would let me care for you and give you the comforts and pleasures of life that money can buy, and then as the years go on, I could teach you to love me—but now that is all over!"

"Yes, dear John, all over," she answered softly. "I could never sell my love for gold."

XXIII

The news of Rosamond's good fortune brought with the letters of congratulation from friends, many invitations both for herself and the Lees. But although John was constantly included he declined them all.

"John is so indifferent to everything but his work," Mrs. Lee said in a tone of distress one day to Rosamond, "but men tell me he is going to make a name for himself some day. He seems years older than he did a year ago, and so very quiet, and I want him buoyant and young and happy," and Mrs. Lee stooped and touched Rosamond's forehead with her lips as she left the room. It grieved Rosamond beyond words to hear Mrs. Lee say this for she knew that she herself was the cause of it.

The days of getting acquainted all over again with the little village seemed full of surpassing joy to Rosamond. She helped to take up, as far as she could, some of the parish duties where her uncle had laid them down. The young rector who had been called to take Father Dare's place worked with enthusiasm and zeal, but he could never touch the heart of his little flock as did Father Dare, or even Rosamond. She found so many children named for her when she again went among the village people, after her four years' absence, that it quite took her breath away.

John told her that they were raising the biggest rose-bush in all Canada—"roses of all shades." They shortened the name to Rose, with the exception of one Frenchman, better educated than the others, who insisted on the full name for his little daughter and he often called her "My Rose of the world."

The winter brought with it social pleasures and obligations in Montreal, from which Rosamond had no escape. But the delight at being home again was so great that all else seemed of little importance.

There were times when John felt sure that she was still brooding over the fact that no word had come to her from Dr. Russell since her sight had been restored and he knew she suffered much in silence.

XXIV

Great preparations were going on at the Nest for a ball to be given in Montreal, for which invitations had been received. It was to be the social event of the season. Three wonderful evening gowns had just arrived from Paris.

Mrs. Lee exclaimed as she looked at herself in the mirror, an exquisite vision in clinging satin and rare lace. "Once all such magnificence would not have given me this feeling of terrible extravagance." She tried to look serious as she added, "I really feel as though I were doing something wicked. I shall be ashamed to meet Père Angelo after all this foolish expenditure of money. How do you feel about it, Doris, dear?" and she turned to admire her sister just entering the room.

"Not that way," Doris answered, as she tilted her head a little on one side, looking with satisfaction at herself in the Psyche mirror. "I think I rather like the strange I that is reflected in the glass. Who but a Frenchman could ever have made such harmony of color out of the blue crêpe and the silver embroidery with the touch of violet and yellow?"

Then, as if half apologetically for her open admiration of herself and her gown, she added: "But you must remember, Mary, dear, I never had so much of this sort of thing as you have had."

Rosamond's gown was all white and shimmery and "ostentatiously plain" as Doris wrote to a friend. She looked like a silvery moonbeam that had lost its way. She would like to have worn the ornament John had sent her, "The Magic Grapes," but he had asked her not to until some time in the future, when she might need him; by that token would he know. John had hurt deeper than he realized. She would have given him her sisterly love and he had spurned it.

The night of the ball proved a great triumph for Rosamond.

From the moment she entered the ball room, the eyes of many were upon her, she alone unconscious of it all. In her queenly grace and simplicity she seemed a thing apart.

The Governor-General asked for an introduction to the beautiful Italian girl—for that she was that night—and men of distinction begged for a dance.

As she returned to the hotel after the ball, Rosamond overheard Doris telling her sister in an undertone that she had had a glimpse of Dr. Russell, as they were leaving the ball-room, but evidently he did not see them.

The next morning on the plea of weariness Rosamond did not linger in the city, as had been planned, but returned home, leaving Mrs. Lee and Doris to follow the next day. A cloud had suddenly arisen that she felt she must escape.

After dinner that night she sat down at the piano, the room unlighted save for the winter moon pouring its weird cold light across the room till it touched her shoulder as a scarf. She put her hands listlessly on the keys and began to sing a rollicking drinking song, as if trying to compel herself to banish all sad thoughts. Just then a step came softly up the path. She stopped

suddenly to listen and did not have to hear it repeated to know whose step it was.

She tried to rise from her chair and could not. She seemed powerless to move. But by the time the maid announced "Dr. Russell," she had recovered her composure.

As the doctor entered the room he hesitated, not feeling sure, in the dim light, that it was Rosamond; but as she came toward the lighted hall he saw Rosamond, the child as he first remembered her. At a glance he discovered, added to the simple graces of the girl, that which made the maturer beauty of the woman doubly fascinating. The one trace left of the blind girl was an attentive turn of the head, as if listening for the voice first. He bent low over her hand and raised his eyes to hers, eyes that sent out sparks of fire, and under whose gaze women before now had felt a hypnotic power.

When he spoke it was with the same deep, masterful voice she remembered, oily and smooth.

He led her to the little sofa placed in the broad window, looking down upon the moonlit lake, and he sat by her side, and when she would call for lights he begged her not to.

"My sight is dazzled already," he said to her softly. "Let me talk to you first as I cannot in a brightly lighted room."

He did not wait for her to answer but continued: "I saw you at the ball last night. Once I thought I would speak to you and I followed you

to the conservatory but, even there, you were surrounded by men and women of wealth and distinction, and I felt that you, shining like a star among them, would have no thought for your old friend; so I came away, blinded and haunted by your beauty."

His broad compliments seemed strangely out of harmony, but Rosamond did not stop him.

"I found out at what hotel you were stopping and went there to see you, but was told you had left town. Then I went to John Lee's office and he was kinder to me than I could have expected, for he told me that you had returned this morning to Monterre, and that I would find you at the Nest, and alone, as Mrs. Lee and Miss Doris were still in Montreal."

"Did he say that to you?" Rosamond murmured, her heart growing suddenly cold and numb.

"And I have you at last after all these years, and alone," he whispered passionately.

He tried to take her hand in his, but she held him off. He was too good an actor in this familiar rôle to hurry his part.

He ignored for the moment her recovered sight. One glance had told him that the Rosamond before him must be approached in a very different manner from the little Rosamond to whom he had once made love. He brought into service his eloquence, his daring flattery, the weapons always at hand to gain his end with women of his own world.

He was not fine enough to realize that he was killing his own cause and that Rosamond was beginning to read his real character. He told her of his busy life and success that was ever falling like ripened fruit into his hand.

"And now I have my reward—I have taken my stand at the head."

He turned to Rosamond with a look in his eyes that a woman might find difficult to resist,—

"And yet—and yet! I have not gained all of life's joy," and he took from a vase of flowers standing by his side, a rose, and began carelessly pulling it apart as he continued: "Can you guess what has brought me to Monterre?"

Then coming still nearer to her, bending down, and touching her hair with his lips lightly, he said, "To ask you to marry me, Rosamond, my love! Give me that little hand," he cried, "the same hand that has held the key to my heart since first you placed it as a child confidingly in mine. Don't tell me that this has come too suddenly to you," he said, as if fearing he might have missed his mark by a too bold stroke at first, for she drew herself away from his embrace.

"I come from the West where our speech is rough and plain, lacking the polish of John Lee and his friends." Just then the servant entering with lights and coffee, Rosamond did not answer him, but later when they were once more alone, Rosamond seated herself on a low seat where the light fell sharply on Dr. Russell's face. She ig-

nored his last words and was again the simple girl as he remembered her.

He knew that her love once given would never change and, even his heart, seared with the passions of the world, was not entirely indifferent to the love of a true woman. Still, he had made no effort in all these years to see the penniless Rosamond and was only reminded of her now when rumor told him that she had inherited a fortune. He had been told many months before of Rosamond's restored sight and he had sent to her then no word of congratulation. But now things were different. Many women could have brought him youth and beauty but, added to this, with Rosamond was the one thing still more necessary to his happiness. He used his profession only as a means to something else, position and fame, but with no real love for the work itself. Now with the fortune Rosamond would bring him, his profession could become secondary to the pleasures of life. As he finished his coffee and put down the cup, he felt sure of Rosamond and her fortune to the point of exhilaration.

At last Rosamond spoke in a light, indifferent tone, ignoring his words, and looking searchingly into his eyes. Had he spoken these same words once they would have given her the greatest joy.

"Dr. Russell, I am no longer a poor girl. Did you know that?"

The look that swept across his face told her all that she wanted to know.

"Oh, yes, my Rosamond," he said, "I did hear something about it in Montreal, but when there are so many more important and vital things uppermost in one's mind, such a small bit of gossip is easily forgotten."

He tried to make light of the question, but failed. Under the pure, earnest gaze of Rosamond, deceit could not longer hide itself.

"Dr. Russell," Rosamond rose as she said this, and she was no longer the young girl who might easily be wooed, but a woman, under whose eye Roland Russell's lowered, "You have taught me tonight what real love is—and I thank you. I have been living in its glory for many years and have only just found it out. I cannot accept your offer. The counterfeit thing you offer me is an insult to the very name of love."

That night two notes passed each other—one from Rosamond to John Lee in Montreal, asking him to run down, if possible, the next night to Monterre.

"When I tell you that I am wearing the magic grapes, you will understand and come," she wrote.

The other note Rosamond received the next day from John, telling her that he was starting that night for Manitoba on some important agricultural business for the Government that might keep him away for several months.

"Work," he wrote, "that should have been looked after before, but today I find it easier to

leave you than I would have yesterday; if the time ever comes that you need me, one word from you will bring me from the farthest corner of the world."

Mrs. Lee lingered in Montreal to see John off and returned to the Nest with an aching heart. John had tried to hide his sorrow from his mother but, when he said good-bye, he whispered in her ear: "I am afraid it is all over for me, Mother, darling. No woman has yet resisted Roland Russell." He put his hand on her shoulder as if there alone would he find comfort, and she felt his cheek wet with tears against hers. Then her love for Rosamond grew cold and she returned home with a feeling of apprehension.

Rosamond met her at the door.

"Dr. Russell has been here," she said in a low, unnatural voice.

"Yes, John told me," Mrs. Lee answered.

"And he will not return, for I have sent him away," Rosamond continued between sobs. "May I always stay with you and John?" she murmured; "I cannot think of life apart from you and him, and sometimes I am oh! so very lonely, even with you all and Père Angelo. There are times when my heart cries out for my uncle, for my mother."

Then, coming nearer to Mrs. Lee, she said in a low voice choked with unshed tears, "And for the father I may never know."

This was the first time Rosamond had ever spoken of her father to Mrs. Lee.

“Yes, Rosamond dear, always, with John and me.”

* * * * *

Ere another June scattered its blossoms and perfume over the land, the bells had rung for the marriage of Rosamond and John. But on that occasion, beside the bells, a set of liquid chimes was playing “The Voice that Breathed o’er Eden.” They had been given to the church among the pines on that happy day by John Lee, “In Memoriam.”

XXVI

In the low murmur of the Canadian pines,
I hear the whisperings of half-forgotten days.

The Monterre of today is not the Monterre that Father Dare came to many years ago, bowed down by the burden of a troubled conscience.

Then the rich soil and well-drained pastureland, through which ran deep, cool brooks that never failed the thirsty cattle, was more than sufficient for the needs of the few families in the village.

Today there is little of its soil untilled and the farmers are reaping rich harvests.

The one spot familiar is the graveyard where Father Dare sleeps. Here among the tall pines the hush of the sanctuary is felt, save for the spirit note of the hermit thrush at twilight, or the Angelus ringing out its message to the living, the Angelus that Father Dare never failed to respond to with uncovered head.

By the lakeside, men of means have built handsome homes, some going far back out into the hills, where well-appointed lawns and brilliant gardens attract the eye of the stranger passing up the lake.

But the greatest change of all is in the little village itself. Prosperity reigns! And if you ask who is responsible for it, you do not have to go far to be told.

"The niece of Father Dare, whose name is a household word, and of the strong, cool-headed, young farmer husband."

John Lee has taught the farmers of Monterre practical, scientific farming and now stands back and looks with pride on what has been accomplished. No longer do you find men gossiping idly the summer's day away. Too much depends on the day's work for that.

Rosamond waited patiently the carrying out of a cherished dream and at last has seen it realized. She bought the little cottage so filled with blessed memories and with it all the adjoining land, including the "grapery."

The house still stands, a lasting monument to Father Dare, but enlarged beyond recognition. Over the door, as you enter, you read:

THE MAGIC GRAPE

and on a tiny tablet at one side:

IN MEMORY OF
MY BELOVED UNCLE
ERNEST HUNTINGTON DARE
AND IN
GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING FOR RECOVERED SIGHT

Here our boys who returned from the war—some of them blind and never to regain their sight—are entertained until their health has been restored, or their sight given back to them. But to those who never again may see the light in

mother's or sweetheart's eye, Rosamond gives a mother's love and special care—and when they leave this little Paradise they also carry with them a precious memory.

“The Grapery” has been enlarged and yields a handsome income, making the “Magic Grape” quite independent now of Rosamond's help. James, the cripple, from his high perch in a small office on the grounds, is the overseer and, as he drives about in his little dog-cart, he shows you with peculiar pleasure a grape whose amber skin seems filled to bursting with perfumed sunshine, and then, with the pride of a Burbank, he adds: “That is the *Rosamond*, hybridized by Mr. John and—myself.”

Père Angelo is still the dominant note in the village. He not only gives of his love and time unsparingly to his own parish, as of old, but those outside his church come to him for counsel and he never fails them.

In the “Magic Grape” he is particularly interested. There is a bond between Rosamond and himself that he alone understands. The tie of blood, though unrecognized by Rosamond, holds these two together in a mysterious way.

In all these years Père Angelo has been away from Monterre but once, and then he went home to Italy, ordered away for a few months' rest by his physician. When he returned, he put into

Rosamond's hands a casket containing a string of pearls and a wonderfully carved crucifix.

"They belonged to my mother," he said. "I want you to keep them for me."

She took them tenderly in her hands and accepted them simply as she knew he would wish her to; but she felt sure that from that moment he had also placed in her sacred keeping some secret of his life. That he was of noble birth, carrying to his grave a great sorrow, she had long before been led to imagine.

XXVII

The sun was setting across the lake and a young mother and child were watching the soft opalescent colors on clouds and water.

The boy was standing by his mother's side with his little arms clasped closely about her neck. That they were mother and son, no one could doubt. John Huntington Lee had his mother's eyes and rich Italian coloring. His figure was tall and slender for his age and his ways those of a young prince. He had just whispered in her ear:

"Do you know, Mother, what I was born for? Just to wait on you and Grandmamma." He was having his supper in "The Tree" and the two were looking down from their high seat on to the garden now lost in the twilight.

"Where have all my lovely flowers gone?" the boy exclaimed. Then as he looked up at the sky, "I see," he cried, "my flowers have wings; all the roses have gone up into the clouds to play. Do you see them up there, Mother, for other little boys and girls to enjoy?"

John, overhearing his son as he and Père Angelo came up the walk, said:

"Wouldn't my boy's imagination have delighted Father Dare, Père Angelo?"

But the moment Père Angelo's voice was heard, all else was forgotten. The child was in his arms before his mother knew it. The love between these two was intense.

"Some time, if we don't look out, we may have a Priest in the family," John said laughingly to Rosamond one day.

"Do you think Père Angelo would object?" Rosamond answered demurely.

